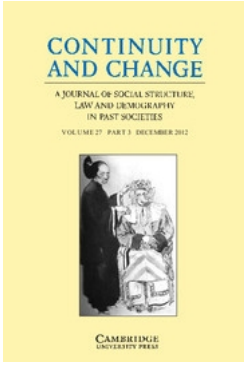

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Continuity and Change / Volume 2 / Issue 03 / December 1987, pp 387 - 422
DOI: 10.1017/S0268416000000710, Published online: 11 November 2008

Continuity and Change **2** (3), *1987, 387–422. Printed in Great Britain*

Lone-parent families and the Welfare State: past and present

K. D. M. SNELL* and J. MILLAR†

Behind social-policy literature, and in most historical writing, there lies an overwhelming assumption that the benefits provided by the 'Welfare State' represent a major step forward taken during the twentieth century, and that they arose in response to social problems that were historically unique to the Victorian and post-Victorian periods. Sometimes 1908 is taken as the most significant date of origin, albeit with acknowledgement made of mid- and late-nineteenth-century factory, sanitary, educational and Poor-Law legislation. Alternatively, others have stressed the crucial influence of the Beveridge Report and the post-war legislation. But in both historiographical emphases, the 'Welfare State' is usually seen as emerging from an eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century background in which welfare provision was poorly developed, administratively incompetent and insensitive to the needs of the poor.

It therefore came as something of a shock, still unabsorbed, when David Thomson recently charted what he called the 'decline of social security' for the elderly since 1837.[1] The historical pattern of change was, it seems, virtually the reverse of that enshrined in the literature and commonly believed today. Taking transfer payments to the elderly as a percentage of the average gross incomes of manual workers, with both calculated on an adult-equivalent basis, Thomson was able to show that 'pensions' in 1837–1838 had been as high as 70–90 per cent of the average incomes of manual workers. In 1863 they were 70–80 per cent. By 1887–1891 they had fallen to between 25–38 per cent. In the post-war period (1953–1954), after

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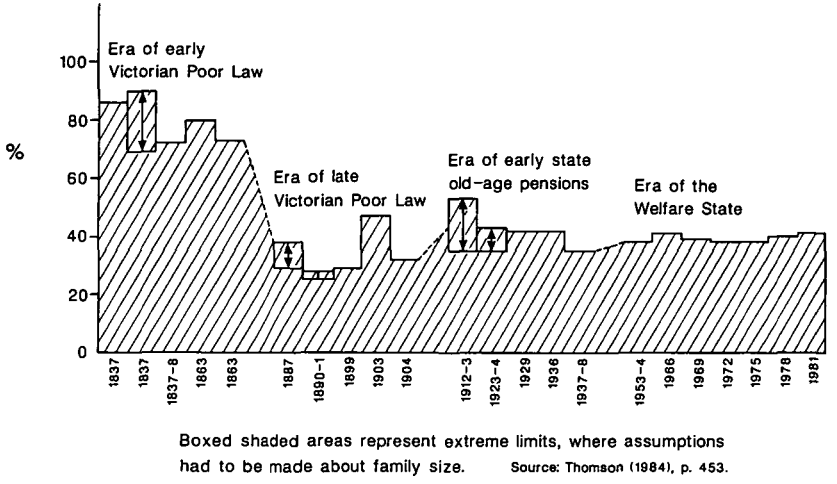

FIGURE 1. Pensions and working-class incomes, 1837–1981, showing standard old-age pension as a percentage of gross income of a working-class adult.

the years of the Labour administration, they were 38 per cent. In 1978 they were 40 per cent and in 1981 41 per cent. This is to omit many of the calculations he made for different periods, but represents the decline in outline. We have reproduced his graph in Figure 1. The arguments in his remarkable article were highly pessimistic and put a completely different complexion on the notion of 'Victorian values' than that which is so stridently insisted upon by some people today. Our society, a hundred and fifty years ago, before the 'Welfare State' and during a period of supposedly minimal state 'interference', when it was considerably poorer and less able to afford generous transfer payments than is now the case, nevertheless succeeded in supporting its elderly people at over twice the relative level of today. After reading Thomson's article, it might appear that the concept of 'relative deprivation' as it appeared in the work of Runciman, Townsend and others, was no historical accident, but rather an historically unexamined but appropriate moral and intellectual response to the changes Thomson documents.[2]

Thomson considered the elderly and the relative value of benefits paid to them since 1837. He thus threw out a challenge to all historians of social welfare to test his thesis for other groups and other periods. In this article we extend Thomson's analysis by considering the claims made by him for the elderly in relation to lone-parenthood, to see whether the pattern of decline he uncovered applies more generally. This combines readily with a second question posed for the social historian by the contemporary, and sometimes hysterical, commentary upon the disturbing scale and supposed

newness of the phenomenon of lone-parent families in British society. How new is this 'problem', and how unprecedented is the current structural and demographic position of lone parents? To what extent does the scale of the problem influence the level of support accorded them? The huge increase in the number of lone-parent families in recent years has led them to be thought of as a novel and major problem for social policy. There has indeed been a striking rise in their incidence: between 1971 and 1982 the number of lone-parent families rose from 570,000 to 930,000: an increase of 63 per cent and one owing much to the growing number of divorced lone mothers. This trend has given rise to much social, moral and political concern, based in part on an assumption that the situation now reached is unrivalled by anything experienced in the past. The first section of this article therefore examines the historical incidence of lone-parent families, to see if this assumption is warranted. We then move to test Thomson's hypothesis with a comparison of the welfare payments made to lone parents in the past and present.

THE INCIDENCE OF LONE PARENTHOOD

Current estimates of the number of lone-parent families are based on a combination of census data, administrative statistics and data from continuous surveys such as the General Household Survey.[3] In 1984 there were estimated to be 940,000 lone-parent families in Great Britain, with about one and a half million children living in these families.[4] Lone parenthood is overwhelmingly a female experience; about nine in ten of all lone parents are women and the majority of these women (about two-thirds) became lone mothers following marital breakdown – divorce or separation.

About one in seven (13 per cent) of all families with dependent children are now headed by a lone parent. However, although this means that the number of such families has almost doubled in the past twenty-five years (from 474,000 in the 1961 census), it is also obviously the case that there must always have been families consisting of a single parent bringing up children alone. Of the various ways to become a lone parent – death, separation, divorce and the birth of a child to a single woman – only formal divorce is relatively recent. Anderson has calculated that, in the nineteenth century, the proportion of marriages broken at various marriage durations by death is close to the proportion now broken by death and divorce. As he points out:

> The problem of marital breakup is not, then, new; but we view it against a historical background where it was temporarily lower and we lack so far the institutions and attitudes which were available in the past to handle what was clearly, statistically, an equally or even more serious problem.[5]

A similar tentative conclusion is suggested by census data. In 1861, 8.1 per cent of all women aged between 25 and 49 (i.e. those most likely to have children) were widows, in 1901 the figure was 7.3 per cent, in 1951 3.2 per cent and in 1981 1.5 per cent. In 1921 (when divorce was first recorded separately in the census) 0.1 per cent of the women in this age group were divorced; this rose to 1.4 per cent in 1951 and 7.3 per cent in 1981. Thus the proportion of women who were potentially lone mothers, either through marital breakdown or the death of a spouse, was very similar in 1861 (8.1 per cent) and in 1981 (8.9 per cent) – the difference being that divorce largely replaced widowhood as the main cause of marital dissolution.[6]

For the period before the nineteenth-century censuses it is possible to make estimates of the number and categories of lone-parent families by using data from listings of inhabitants and poor-law settlement examinations. Listings of inhabitants have of course been used extensively by Peter Laslett and others, with a view to understanding household structure in the past. However they have not hitherto been applied to an examination of lone parenthood. The latter source – settlement records – originate in the Settlement Act of 1662 and continue late into the nineteenth century. This source can be seen as one which parallels modern D.H.S.S. (Department of Health and Social Security) sources, providing data specifically on applicants for poor relief. It does not cover all such applicants, but there is no reason to suppose that its coverage is unrepresentative of relief recipients. Unlike the listings, it does not provide a representative sample of the total population, but it does supply material which can be compared with more recent figures on those claiming social-security benefits. It thus enables a comparison over time of the proportion of welfare recipients who were lone parents, and reveals the types of lone parents involved. Let us look first at the evidence from local listings of inhabitants.

We have used the excellent collection of listings held by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. Table 1 provides summary information from selected listings on lone-parent families as a percentage of all simple family households with children in each historical community. Simple family households with children consist of households of parents and unmarried children without the addition of other relatives. The table is arranged chronologically and summarises the complete data which can be found in Appendix A. Two caveats should be observed. First, the large majority of listings do not supply ages of children, and it is impossible to follow closely the modern definition of a lone-parent family – that is, a family consisting of one adult and one or more dependent children aged below 16, or between 16 and 18 and in full-time education. In this earlier period, there would have been virtually

no children aged 16–18 in full-time education in the parishes covered. However, some children aged over 16 from both lone-parent and two-parent families will have been included in the figures, as we have no way of excluding them without information on their ages. It is however probable that any such 'children' will form a small proportion of the total children covered, because it is possible to show from settlement examinations that the mean age of leaving home in this period was much lower than it is now – the average age among the labouring classes being about fourteen. Children then commonly went into domestic or farm service, or were apprenticed.[7] In other words the absence of the ages of the children is less problematic than would be the case for an equivalent source today. It is possible that the age of leaving home was somewhat different for children from lone-parent families compared with those from two-parent families, and lone parents in this period would be further on in the 'life-cycle' than would have been two-parent families. It does not seem feasible to deal with this difficulty with regard to the bulk of the listings; but a handful of listings do give ages, and we can turn to these shortly for more detailed data which match the modern data more exactly. It will be seen then that any differential in the age of leaving home by family type does not significantly affect the findings. The figures therefore bear comparison with modern figures despite their failure to follow strictly the letter of the current definition.

Secondly, it should be observed that we have reported lone-parent families as a percentage of all simple family households with children. That is, extended and multiple family households with children have been excluded. Extended family households are simple family households together with the addition of relative(s) not constituting a family in their own right. Multiple family households compose two or more related family units. Again, the omission is forced upon us by the nature of the source, but it is unlikely to prove crucial for comparative purposes. It is now well known from the work of Laslett that the percentage of total households with children in the past that were extended or multiple family households was very small, for example, between 5.7 and 8.6 per cent in fourteen communities selected from those included in Table 1. It is often impossible to judge whether extended and multiple households with children should be judged to be lone-parent or not, along the lines of the modern definition. We do not know whether the percentage of extended or multiple family households with children who effectively had a lone parent was unrepresentative of that for simple family households. The extended family household may have been one refuge for the widowed, but we know nothing about effective parenthood in such a context. However, even if extended households were unrepresentative in the regards which concern

TABLE 1
Lists of inhabitants: families headed by a lone parent, England 1551–1851[a]

Date	No. of listings	Simple family households with children	No. of lone parents			Lone parents (%)[b]
			Fathers	Mothers	Total	
1551–1698	24	2,738	153	451	604	22.1
1700–1705	18	779	63	93	156	20.0
1752–1796	19	952	52	98	150	15.8
1801–1851	9	1,060	65	78	143	13.5
Total	70	5,529	333	720	1,053	19.0

[a] For further details of the places covered in each period see Appendix A. Calculations in Tables 1, 2 and Appendix A are based on manuscript analyses of listings in the possession of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.

[b] As percentage of all simple family households with children.

us, the number of such households were too few for this to have any significant impact on the results.

We have noted that lone-parent families currently constitute about 13 per cent of all families with dependent children. How does this figure compare with those of the past? It can be seen from Table 1 (and from Appendix A from which it is derived) that the modern 'problem' is relatively slight when viewed in historical perspective. In these communities the proportion of families headed by a lone parent varied from nil to as high as almost 60 per cent in St Johns, Southampton, in 1696. Of the 71 communities (counting the rural sample for Shropshire as one for the moment), 30 had over 20 per cent of the simple family households headed by a lone parent. For the total communities the overall figure was about 19 per cent, a figure significantly higher than that found today. It is clear that we can safely discard any notion that the two-parent family has been a fixed norm in the past, from which British society has recently begun to deviate dangerously.

These figures can be supplemented with data from listings for historical communities outside England, to see if the same conclusion is supported. Table 2 provides comparable, if geographically eccentric, data from a handful of other communities for which comparable data is available.[8] Figures of the same order as England are found, with the average figure for all simple family households with children headed by a lone parent being almost 16 per cent. Other developed countries have shared the recent British rise in lone parenthood,[9] but there is a danger in projecting this

TABLE 2
Families headed by a lone parent: other countries

Place	*Date*	*Population*	*Simple family households with children*	*No. of lone parents*			*Lone parents* (%)[b]
				Fathers	*Mothers*	*Total*	
Montplaisant, France	1644	338	22	0	2	2	9.1
Loffingen, Germany	1687	697	94	1	8	9	9.6
Vehrenbach, Germany	1705	c.177	34	2	3	5	14.7
Lesnica, Polish Silesia	1720	1,637	271	18	18	36	13.3
Hallines, France	1773	241	42	7	11	18	42.9
Longueness, France	1778	333	42	2	8	10	23.8
Colorno, Italy	1782	308[a]	40	6	6	12	30.0
Kirchspiel Grossener, Germany	1795	882	69	2	6	8	11.8
Belgrade, Serbia	1733–1734	1,356	139	3	19	22	15.8
Bristol, America	1689	421	60	0	1	1	1.7
Nishinoyima Hama-issaicho, Japan	1713	653	54	5	10	15	27.8

[a] The 308 represents a sample from a total population of about 4,000.
[b] See Table 1, note *b*.

rise linearly into the past. Once again the historical figures are higher than one would expect to find today.

Of those heading a lone-parent family in community listings, it is not usually possible to distinguish between those deserted by their spouse, and those whose spouse had died. Nor among lone women is it possible to separate widowed and deserted women from those who owed their situation to having had one or more illegitimate children. We shall be able to be more specific on these points when we examine evidence from Poor-Law sources. But it can be seen from Tables 1 and 2 that, as is the case today, women rather than men predominated as the heads of lone-parent families. Of the 1,053 lone parents in Table 1, 720 (68 per cent) were women. For the communities outside England the figure was 67 per cent. The current (1982) estimates show that only 11 per cent of lone-parent families are headed by a man, which means that lone-parenthood has become increasingly confined to women. This is largely because of the fall in the proportion of lone-parent families created by the death of a spouse. Increased life expectancy and the fall in mortality at childbirth means that families are now less likely to become motherless because the mother has

TABLE 3
1851 census families headed by a lone parent in selected areas

Place	*Simple family households with children*	*No. of lone parents*			*Lone parents* (%)[a]
		Fathers	*Mothers*	*Total*	
Llanfihangel Yu Howyn	27	—	4	4	14.8
Garth Gynyd	14	1	—	1	7.1
Caerwent	31	—	1	1	3.2
Spittal	56	7	3	10	17.9
Vro	46	1	5	6	13.0
Llanferras	107	8	13	21	19.6
Abergele	188	12	29	41	21.8
Pwllheli	115	8	19	27	23.5
Ushlawrcoed	84	4	13	17	20.2
Broughton	43	2	3	5	11.6
Total	711	43	90	133	18.7

[a] See Table 1, note *b*.

died leaving young children (or indeed fatherless because the father has died). Further factors which would help to explain this change are the greater ease of re-marriage for men than for women, and the modern legal convention and practice that children of a broken marriage go to the mother rather than the father.[10] It is not yet clear how firmly established the practice of the children staying with the mother rather than the father was in the past. It is possible that it was less pronounced than today, given the fact that in the family economy of very many trades and occupations before the mid- or late nineteenth century children from an early age were of considerable utility to the father. And, unlike today, even in many occupations (like agricultural labour) where the man worked away from the home place, it was often the case that a child worked alongside the father, was taught by him, and the father received the child's wages in addition to his own.[11]

The detailed historical evidence considered so far has mainly covered the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The findings can be extended by using mid-nineteenth-century census data, from the 1851 census. An analysis was made of the scattered Welsh parishes of Llanfihangel Yu Howyn, Garth Gynyd, Caerwent, Spittal, Vro, Llanferras, Abergele, Pwllheli and Ushlawrcoed, with the Cheshire parish of Broughton, and the categories used were the same as those employed for

the listings of the earlier period.[12] The results for simple family households are shown in Table 3.

The percentage of lone-parent families is once again significantly higher than is the case today, at about 19 per cent. Again, women headed about two-thirds of these families. The results are in fact very close to those found for communities before the mid-nineteenth century.

FAMILY TYPE

The unusual detail in a few listings enables us to define lone-parent families more exactly along the lines of the modern definition, to be more detailed on the characteristics of the families, and to compare their characteristics with those of two-parent families. The listings of Corfe Castle in Dorset (1790) and Winwick in Lancashire (1801) have been used for this purpose. Table 4 shows the results. Lone parents made up 15 per cent of all families with dependent children in Corfe Castle and 25 per cent in Winwick. In both cases the mean age of the head of the lone-parent family was higher than that of the two-parent families. The reverse is true today, which again suggests the dominance of widowhood as a cause of lone parenthood in the past. However, with regard to family size the results are similar to the current situation in that the lone-parent families tended to be smaller than the two-parent families.

For Corfe Castle it is possible to break down lone-parent family types, distinguishing between widows, widowers, women separated from their husbands and women who had borne illegitimate children. This showed the relative insignificance of marital breakdown as a cause of lone parenthood in this parish, with only three women being separated from their husbands, and no men were lone parents by virtue of their wives leaving them. All the other twenty lone parents (ten women and ten men) owed their situation to the death of their spouse, as there were no cases of illegitimacy.

POOR-LAW RECORDS

The evidence from the parochial listings can be supplemented by data from the records of the Old and New Poor-Law administration. Such material can be compared with that obtained from D.H.S.S. sources today, and allows a more detailed analysis of the categories of lone-parent families in the past. Under the Poor Laws applicants for relief were examined as to their settlement, which was the place where (or from where) they were entitled to relief. Most often families would apply in one parish where they would be examined, then removed to their parish of settlement if it was judged that they had no legal entitlement to assistance in the place where

TABLE 4

Characteristics of lone parents and two-parent families with children aged under 16: Corfe Castle (1790) and Winwick (1801)[a]

	Lone-parent families		*Two-parent families*	
		N		*N*
Corfe Castle, Dorset, 1790				
Percentage of all families with dependent children	15%	23	85%	130
Of these families				
Mean age of head	47.4	23	39.9	130
Mean no. children	2.52	58	2.98	387
% with 1 child	39	9	21	27
% with 2 children	17	4	24	31
% with 3+ children	43	10	55	72
Winwick, Lancashire, 1801				
Percentage of all families with dependent children	25%	15	75%	45
Of these families				
Mean age of head	43.5	15	38.3	45
Mean no. children	2.80	42	3.09	139
% with 1 child	27	4	22	10
% with 2 children	20	3	24	11
% with 3+ children	53	8	53	24

[a] Calculations have been made from the listings, held at the Cambridge Group, of inhabitants for these parishes.

they were at present. The examinations provide detailed information on poor-relief claimants, such as their ages, number of children, marital status and other material relevant to the process of deciding where they were settled. We have taken a sample of 897 examinations of families with dependent children (under 16) from south-eastern rural and market-town parishes, between 1700 and 1850, in order to consider the characteristics of families applying for relief. Of these families 264 were headed by a lone parent. Thus about three in ten (29.4 per cent) families with dependent children applying for relief under the Old and early years of the New Poor Laws were lone-parent families. The percentage is high, and can be compared with the current figures for Supplementary Benefit receipt. In 1983, of the 948,000 families with children dependent on Supplementary Benefit, 447,000 (47 per cent) were lone-parent families.[13]

The mean age of the heads of the two-parent and lone-parent families respectively was 34.9 and 34.2. Of the two-parent families 26.5 per cent

TABLE 5
Lone-parent families in receipt of Poor Relief and Social Security Benefits

	Poor-Law records, 1700–1850		*Social-Security benefits, 1983*[a]	
Marital status	*N*	%	*N*	%
Unmarried	46	17.4	144,000	27.0
Separated/divorced	91	34.5	294,000	55.2
Widowed	91	34.5	71,000	13.2
Total women	228	86.4	509,000	95.4
Men	36	13.6	24,000	4.5
Total	264	100.0	533,000	100.0

[a] The figures for the unmarried and the divorced and separated refer to receipt of Supplementary Benefit, while those for the widowed refer to receipt of Widowed-Mothers' Allowance. Amongst Supplementary Benefit recipients there were 8,000 widows in 1983, but many of these women would already have been counted as in receipt of Widowed-Mothers' Allowance so they have not been included in this table.

Source: D.H.S.S., *Social-Security Statistics 1985* (1986), tables 34.82 and 11.30.

had one child, 28.4 per cent had two children and 45.1 per cent had three or more. The respective figures for the lone parents were 40.9 per cent, 23.5 per cent and 35.6 per cent. It is not possible to show whether lone-parent families with only one child were more likely than two-parent families with one child to seek relief; but the contrasts in the proportions of single- and two-parent families on relief with only one child also obtain today: amongst lone-parent families receiving Supplementary Benefit in 1982 53.3 per cent had one child compared with 34.2 per cent of two-parent families where the man was unemployed and receiving Supplementary Benefit.

Table 5 compares the marital status of the lone parents receiving poor relief with current figures for the receipt of Widowed Mothers' Allowance and Supplementary Benefit. Under the current social security system widows are treated differently from other lone parents in that they may be entitled to receive national insurance benefits in respect of their widowhood, and thus very few widows receive Supplementary Benefit. Combining the figures for both these benefits therefore gives figures which are more comparable with the Poor-Law records than would information on Supplementary Benefit receipt alone.

As Table 5 shows, as many as 86 per cent of lone parents dependent on poor relief in the past were women. This figure is much higher than

that found in the census or listings, and underlines the fact that lone mothers were less likely to be able to support themselves without parish assistance than were lone fathers. The same is also true today, in that men make up only about five per cent of lone parents receiving benefits but 11 per cent of all lone parents. Separated and widowed women, perhaps surprisingly, accounted for about equal proportions of poor relief recipients, despite the fact that widows in the total population outnumbered the separated.[14] Thus over a third of lone parents dependent on poor relief were women separated from their partners. This phenomenon is clearly not something novel to the 1970s and beyond, as is sometimes claimed.

Let us summarise the argument so far. It may come as something of a surprise to find that the supposedly 'modern' problem of lone parenthood was in fact much more common in the past. We have found, from English listings of inhabitants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that on average about 19 per cent of all simple family units were headed by a lone parent. This compares with a figure of 13 per cent for the early 1980s. The characteristics of the lone parents have changed, with marital breakdown replacing widowhood as the main cause of lone parenthood; nevertheless a significant proportion of lone mothers receiving relief in the past owed their situation to separation from their spouse. Widowhood and marital breakdown are not, of course, usually seen in the same light. No blame or responsibility attaches to widows for the situation they find themselves in. But divorced, separated and single mothers are often seen as less deserving because they are considered to be, to a greater or lesser extent, the architects of their own situation. Thus, although the proportion of families headed by a lone parent in the past was apparently as high or higher than it is now, it does not necessarily follow that the experience of lone parenthood and the way in which society views the status is the same. On the other hand, however the lone-parent family comes into being (whether through divorce, separation, illegitimacy or death) the needs of such families are to some extent similar, and they face the common problem of how to provide for themselves and their children, both physically and financially. In the next section we compare the financial assistance that lone parents received from the State in the past with that which they currently receive.

WELFARE PAYMENTS FOR LONE PARENTS

The incomes of lone parents – particularly lone mothers – are notoriously low today, and this has been demonstrated in a number of studies.[15] The Finer Committee, reporting in 1974, noted the very high risk of poverty

faced by lone mothers and summarised the causes by pointing out that lone mothers are

> distinguished particularly by their dependence on one adult alone to provide the family's income, and handicapped by the relatively low level of earnings which mothers with children, particularly young children, can achieve, mainly because of the low rates of pay for women's work, but also, to a much lesser extent, because of the restrictions they may have to place on the hours they can work.[16]

In the 13 years since that report there seems to have been very little change. Women still have earnings which are in general lower than those of men, and in recent years employment opportunities for lone mothers appear to have contracted.[17] Many lone mothers therefore rely on social security payments for their main source of income, and in the social security system lone mothers are divided into two groups: widows, who may receive national insurance widows' benefits, and the others who are eligible only for means-tested Supplementary Benefit. The basic rates of Widowed Mothers' Allowances are usually higher than the basic rates of Supplementary Benefit, but Supplementary Benefit varies with both the ages of the children and the length of time in receipt whereas Widowed Mothers' Allowance does not. In addition those on Supplementary Benefit will usually have their housing costs met in full, and may also receive additional weekly payments in respect of special needs (such as heating additions) and one-off payments to meet particular expenses (such as furniture grants). The current weekly rate (from July 1986) of Widowed Mothers' Allowance is £38.70 plus £8.05 for each dependent child; and the ordinary rate of Supplementary Benefit for a single householder is £29.80 plus £10.10 for a child under 10, £15.30 for a child aged 11 to 15, and £18.40 for a child aged 16 to 17.

In order to examine the relative value of transfer payments for pensioners in the post-war 'Welfare State' Thomson compared the single pension rate with average gross income for manual workers per equivalent adult, using data from the Family Expenditure Survey. The actual method of calculation involved dividing the average gross household income of households 'headed' by a manual worker by the average number of adult-equivalents per household. There are three points to note about this methodology. First, Thomson compared payments to pensioners not with the average incomes of people in general but with the average incomes of the working class. Thus he was considering transfer payments to the elderly in relation to the incomes of the working people in the community in which they lived. We have followed the same approach for lone parents. Secondly, he calculated an adult-equivalent income, giving each adult a weight of 1.00 and each child a weight of 0.45. As he points out there is some disagreement over what the 'true' equivalent weight for a child in

relation to an adult should be. In fact 0.45 is close to average equivalence in the Supplementary Benefit scale rates which would give a child under 10 a weight of 0.34 in relation to a single adult and a child of 11–15 a weight of 0.53, giving an average weight of 0.43. Of more concern for our calculations regarding lone parents is the fact that Thomson makes no allowance for economies of scale for two adults living together in relation to one living alone. Most equivalence scales do this.[18] For example, in the equivalences implicit in Supplementary Benefit the weight would be 1.60 for a couple in relation to a weight of 1.00 for a single adult, whereas Thomson gives a couple a weight of 2.00. However, the result of this is that the level of adult-equivalent income calculated by Thomson's method is *lower* than that which would be given by Supplementary Benefit (because he calculates more adult-equivalents in each household) and thus the level of poor relief or benefit in relation to average income is *higher*. A methodology using Supplementary Benefit equivalences, while not affecting the pattern of change over time, would therefore have shown an even larger gap between the incomes of lone mothers on poor relief or benefit and the average working-class income than that given here, where, for the sake of comparability, we follow Thomson's method.

Finally, there is the question of whether gross or net income provides the most appropriate comparison. Thomson used gross rather than net because of the difficulties of obtaining information on net incomes over the whole time period he was considering. However net income represents more accurately than gross income the amount people actually have to live on, and as we are concerned with relative living standards then it is better to include net income. We have therefore done this where possible.

Following this methodology for lone parents is rather more complicated than for pensioners because of the way the benefits vary according to type (whether Widowed Mothers' Allowance or Supplementary Benefit) and family size. To consider benefit rates in relation to average incomes it is therefore necessary to specify particular family types. Table 6 shows the results of doing this for a mother with one child for selected years between 1966 and 1984, and Appendix B provides the detailed figures on which Table 6 is based. For families with one child (the most common type of lone-parent family) Widowed Mothers' Allowance plus child benefit ranges from 35 to 41 per cent of average gross manual income (on an adult-equivalent basis) during this period. For Supplementary Benefit the value of the ordinary rate has declined from between 35 and 39 per cent (depending on the age of the child) in 1966 to between 29 and 33 per cent in 1984. To some extent, however, this short-fall has been taken up by the long-term rate, which in 1984 was equivalent to between 35 and 39 per cent of average gross manual incomes. In relation to net income, Widowed

TABLE 6

Benefits rates for lone parents with one child in relation to the average gross incomes of manual workers on an adult-equivalent basis, 1966–1984[a]

Year	*Widowed Mothers' Allowance plus Child Benefit*[b]		*Supplementary Benefit*			
			Ordinary rate		*Long-term rate*	
	Gross (%)	*Net* (%)	*Gross* (%)	*Net* (%)	*Gross* (%)	*Net* (%)
1966	42	49	35–39	40–44	—	—
1972	40	n.a.	33–39	n.a.	—	—
1975	35	n.a.	28–33	n.a.	34–37	n.a.
1978	41	50	29–34	36–42	35–40	42–49
1981	41	51	30–33	37–42	36–39	45–49
1983	40	51	30–34	38–43	36–40	45–50
1984	39	49	29–33	37–41	35–39	44–49

[a] See Appendix B for details of calculation.

[b] After 1975 (previous to that date family allowance was not paid for one child).

Mothers' Allowance has been equivalent to about half in recent years, and Supplementary Benefit to between two-fifths and a half. Calculations for larger families (not shown in the table) show a similar range of figures.

The figures given for Supplementary Benefit in Table 6 are not, however, entirely satisfactory. They ignore the fact that housing costs are usually met in full for Supplementary Benefit claimants, and take no account of the other payments that can be received in addition to the basic rates of benefit. They also refer to only one particular family type. However, it is possible to make some further comparisons based on the actual average amount of Supplementary Benefit received, using figures from the Social Security Statistics (first published in 1972). These give the average weekly payments for various categories of claimants and include housing cost additions, additional needs payments and so on. They do not include Child Benefit and this has been added to the figures. Making the calculations for adult equivalence as before, the results are shown in Table 7. The figure for benefit income in relation to average gross manual incomes fluctuates at around 35 per cent, falling to 32 per cent in 1975 but rising to 41 per cent in 1981. (1981 is the last year for which it is possible to make consistent comparisons; after that date the basis for meeting housing costs changed.) Only two calculations are possible for net income and these give figures of 45 and 51 per cent. Given the consistencies between these figures and those shown in the previous table, it seems reasonable to conclude that,

TABLE 7

Average weekly Supplementary Benefit and Child Benefit received by lone parents compared with the average gross weekly income of manual workers on an adult-equivalent basis, 1973–1981

	Average manual income per equivalent adult[a]		*Average amount of Supplementary Benefit per equivalent adult*[b]	*Supplementary Benefit (% of income)*	
Year	*Gross*	*Net*		*Gross*	*Net*
1973	19.19	n.a.	6.69	35%	n.a.
1975	29.85	n.a.	9.43	32%	n.a.
1978	44.50	36.30	16.43	37%	45%
1981	66.90	53.60	27.27	41%	51%

[a] See Appendix B for details.

[b] Calculated from D.H.S.S., *Social Security Statistics 1985* (1986), table 34.36, where the figures give the actual average amount of Supplementary Benefit received, which does not include Child Benefit. The value of this has therefore been added.

taking into account family size, lone parents receiving benefits in the modern Welfare State have been provided with an income which is equivalent to about half of the average incomes of manual workers.

LONE PARENTS UNDER THE OLD POOR LAW 1800–1834

For pensioners Thomson made a series of calculations starting in 1837–1838. Our analysis is complementary to his but it does differ in a number of respects. First, while Thomson started his historical enquiry in 1837 we have opted to use poor-relief data for the final stages of the Old Poor Law, i.e. 1800–1834. The implementation of the New Poor Law following 1834 was very inconsistent across the country, with some counties operating very severe curtailments of relief while in others the changes were not put into immediate effect. There may be problems with the areas Thomson chose to start his analysis – Bedfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. In the two East-Anglian counties, almost uniquely in the south, the implementation of the New Poor Law was delayed, because the parish Incorporations of the Old Poor Law in this area already approximated in general terms to the structure of administration desired by the New-Poor-Law commissioners. In the Ampthill Union in Bedfordshire (providing some of Thomson's figures) the situation surrounding the introduction is somewhat unclear in that there was considerable opposition to the New Poor Law, with a serious riot which led the Union to become the subject

of a detailed and argumentative parliamentary enquiry. It is possible that the riot reflected the severity with which the law had been enforced but, since the enquiry itself may have been conducive to more humane poor-relief practices, it is uncertain how representative the Union's relief figures are. Given these problems, it is possible that, while the comparisons made by Thomson are entirely justified, his initial starting point may give a favourable impression of the early stages of the new law, reflecting more properly the level of transfer payments made shortly before the 1834 changes took widespread effect. There are comparable problems for many other regions in the mid- and later 1830s, particularly further north where the law was resisted most strongly. In view of these difficulties associated with assessing figures for the early stages of the New Poor Law, we have concentrated on the period prior to this.

Secondly, our aim is less ambitious than Thomson's in that we shall only compare that period with the present situation and not concern ourselves with the chronology of change over time. Finally we have taken a different region for our figures, namely lowland rural Yorkshire. This is useful in that it provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between transfer payments and earned income for another area. It is also the case that Thomson was commendably at pains to use figures and assumptions that would work against the burden of his temporal comparisons. The choice of rural Yorkshire is also justified for such reasons. It was, between 1800 and 1834, a very high-wage area, one of the highest in the country. In this respect it differed from the southern counties supplying Thomson with his earlier figures, for Bedfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk included some of the lowest-waged agricultural populations in England.[19] By contrast, Yorkshire experienced labour shortages in agriculture during this period because of the rapid growth of its worsted and woollen industries, and one effect of this was the raising of its rural wage levels. This occurred despite the agricultural depression which afflicted farmers in many areas of eastern England between 1815 and the mid 1820s. Most of the Poor-Law evidence we use comes from that period rather than from the time of the Napoleonic Wars, and one consequence of the post-war depression was a curtailment in the relief paid to each recipient in farmer-dominated parish vestries, who found poor rates particularly onerous during a period of falling agricultural prices. The relative and absolute value of transfer payments in such regions was not high compared with the prosperous but low-wage agricultural regions in the south and east of the country. Per-recipient relief in mid-Essex, Cambridgeshire and Oxfordshire (other counties where we have consulted Poor-Law accounts) seems to have been similar to, or slightly higher than, that of lowland rural Yorkshire. Thus, there is every reason to suppose that this was an area where wages were

relatively high and benefit levels representative (or perhaps slightly low) compared with other areas. Accordingly it is not likely that the choice of rural Yorkshire in any way overestimates the relationship between average earned income and transfer payments.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis of payments to lone parents in overseers' accounts is complicated by the difficulty in isolating the heads of such families from the accounts. In particular it is not easy to decide whether some recipients of relief entered as widows had children or not, and for most parishes this has to be done on the basis of the sums given, using knowledge of the sums usually given for single children when orphans and to single aged people. There is also a possibility that the average sums calculated include some cases of single elderly people without children. This inclusion is probably minimal, and insofar as it will lower the average transfer payments calculated, it works against the arguments made here (and by Thomson) and so can be tolerated. It is also difficult to know the numbers of children in the families from this source. This problem can be obviated by turning to the number of children which can be accurately calculated from settlement examinations for the relevant categories of families.[20] Examinations refer to people in the same pauperised situation as those whose names were entered into the overseers' accounts, and as a source can therefore be used to supplement the latter. The figures from Poor-Law accounts do not compare in rigour with those from many modern sources, but the average payments are almost certainly accurate to within about sixpence, and the calculations have been made in such a way that any errors will tend to lower the average transfer payments compared with manual wages in the area. It will be possible to support these initial figures in due course with more rigorous and detailed analysis of data from Terling in Essex and St Andrews in Worcester.

The Yorkshire parishes of Millington, Newton-on-Ouse, Seaton Ross, Kirby Underdale, Goodmanham, Market Weighton and Scampston were used, all of which fell within the York Archdeaconry.[21] Male heads of lone-parent families were excluded because of the difficulty of recognising them as such in the accounts. Given the relatively small number of lone fathers this omission is not likely to be significant. It would in any case have been difficult to assess the payments made, because it is probable that men would be more likely than women to have had sources of income from paid employment as well as income from the Poor Law. The figures from the accounts were totalled and averaged, without weighting, by parish. As before, adult-equivalent figures were obtained by giving each adult a weight of 1.00 and each child a weight of 0.45.

THE LEVEL OF TRANSFER PAYMENTS IN RELATION TO WAGES

The Poor-Law accounts show that, on average, lone mothers were receiving 3.60 shillings a week in cash from the parish (here and elsewhere shillings and pence have been converted into decimals). When account is taken of the number of children with such women (calculated from settlement records) parish cash income averaged at 1.78 shillings per adult equivalent. Weekly cash payment was of course only one aspect of parish support, and to this has to be added income in cash or kind in the form of rent or other housing assistance, house repairs, money from parochial charitable bequests and the common seasonal doleings, wood, coal or other fuel, medical care (often provided in the form of extra food), and flour, bread and other food donations. It is clear from many other parish accounts that a wide range of further items were also provided under the Old Poor Law to the needy. Such assistance could include lying-in and bedding expenses, linen, apprenticeship premiums, raw materials for cottage industrial work (one of the main aims of the 1576 and 1601 Acts had been to provide these, and the policy was supported by the Book of Orders),[22] clothing, shoes and pattens, furniture, smallpox inoculation, all the various burial expenses, the price of a cow, costs for boarding out children, nursing care, cleaning costs for the ill or elderly, spectacles, marriage costs and so on. Most parishes had a stock of housing in which some paupers could be housed free of charge. Alms houses are the best known form of such housing but further accommodation often came from past paupers, taken by the parish upon death, if there were no heirs, as part-recompense for the expenditure that had been incurred on them. Parish authorities would also often pay the housing costs of pauper lodgers, and for some of the poor, housing was provided free by former employers or other morally obliged parties, who as ratepayers would be aware that otherwise such costs would have to be carried by the rates. The parish accounts of these Yorkshire parishes are relatively lacking in detail and make almost no mention of these items, but it is impossible to believe that they were wholly lacking from the practice of relief in these parishes. It seems appropriate to assume a token value at the least of sixpence per family per week to cover such additional forms of income other than rent, although the real value is likely to have been higher than that.[23] Rents averaged at 1.43 shillings per family per week, for the cases where these were given – a relatively low figure compared with areas in the south or in urban districts. It is debatable whether it is appropriate to add this sum to other income. Certainly for some parishes this would be the correct procedure, with rents being paid at regular half yearly or longer intervals, in addition to the weekly sums allowed. But in other parishes, or for some

periods, we cannot be sure whether the parish weekly sums paid included or excluded housing costs, or whether these were being paid separately or at longer-term intervals during the year, or whether indeed rent was being paid at all. In case the validity of such an addition be questioned, the figures have been calculated both with and without rent. Thus, adding together the cash payments, the rent and the imputed value for further income gives a figure of 5.53 shillings per family (4.1 shillings without rent), or 2.73 shillings per equivalent adult (2.03 shillings without rent).

The parishes concerned were predominantly agricultural, and it seems appropriate to relate this figure to the male agricultural wages for the area, following Thomson's argument that the yardstick against which one should compare benefit levels in different periods is the income from waged employment earned by the working class who were the immediate neighbours of those receiving benefits. Male agricultural wages in this area at that time were about 11 shillings weekly.[24] How realistic is such a figure for calculating adult-equivalent familial income? Eleven shillings is the wage on an assumption of full employment every day of the week, which would rarely have been the case for those (to whom these wage data refer) who were not hired on a yearly or fixed-term contract of some sort. This is not the place to enter into detailed discussion of the extent of agricultural unemployment in this area, and for this period it is difficult to estimate. Probably a total of at least six weeks employment was lost every year, during the slack seasons of agriculture; and in truth probably the figure was often much in excess of that, for this lowland area of Yorkshire was predominantly an arable area with seasonally irregular demand for labour. The period after about 1813 was also one of agricultural depression, which particularly affected arable areas, although the depression had less of an effect on northern agricultural employment than it did on that of the south.

Against this negative consideration of male unemployment, one has to weigh the extent of payments in kind to those receiving money wages, and ask how far familial income may have been augmented by the earnings of women and children. Again, it is impossible to document in detail payments in kind for the daily waged labourer, but unlike many pastoral areas and some of the regions further north, they appear to have been slight. Farmers sometimes allowed potato patches to a few labourers, provided harvest beer and the 'harvest home' dinner, perhaps some other meals, and very occasionally a bushel or two of malt after the harvest; and some commentators provide picturesque descriptions of the occasional cast-off clothing worn by agricultural workers. But it is most unlikely that such payments assumed much significance for the class of rural workers that concerns us here. David Davies made virtually no mention of them

at all in his very detailed accounts of the budgets of agricultural workers living further south, but again in a predominantly arable area.[25] Such payments existed certainly, but it would be very far-fetched to claim that they were of such an extent as to counterbalance the substantial losses of income owing to agricultural unemployment during the year. Taking these two considerations into account, it is almost certain that 11 shillings as an estimate of actual weekly male earnings, in kind and money, over the whole year is on the high side. Nevertheless, this somewhat high figure can be retained insofar as its use works against the thrust of the argument here.

Turning to the earnings of married women and their children, it is clear that the area of Yorkshire selected for study was one in which employment opportunities for them were limited. Arthur Young, in his northern tour, commented frequently on the lack of work available for women and children. Certainly, he pointed to some occasional agricultural employment which might be obtained, and in a few localities there was some spinning of worsted, flax and hemp. But in describing employment in the general district he commonly made statements such that: 'The poor women and children are much in want of employment; only a little spinning among them of line [flax] and hemp hards'; or 'poor women and children have no employment'; or 'three-fourths of the women and children were idle'; or 'the poor women and children have no manufacture for employing them'.[26] William Marshall added evidence of women's work in the harvest, in the transplanting and reaping of rape, and in the planting of potatoes.[27] But again, one is not struck by very extensive employment opportunities, and by the early nineteenth century this particular region had little cottage-industrial employment. Of course, such partial employment as was available would also have been open to lone parents, and parish authorities would always have expected such women to earn whatever was possible, the parish subsidising their meagre earnings.[28] In this respect, we need not be too concerned with the calculation of earnings for women – for in the absence of precise data such earnings for lone-parent women and married women may be taken to be largely self-cancelling for the purposes of our relative comparisons.

What then was the relative value of Poor-Law payments? Using measures for the number of children in two-parent families (for the sake of consistency again derived from settlement records) the weekly adult-equivalent income from earnings was 3.48 shillings. The Poor-Law support for lone mothers, on an adult-equivalent basis, therefore represented 78 per cent of the average income from employment of their immediate neighbours (or 58 per cent if one uses the figure which did not include rent). These percentages are not dissimilar to those found in the late 1830s

by Thomson for the elderly, and are considerably higher than the figure calculated for transfer payments in the modern Welfare State.

How does this figure compare with calculations for other regions? Terling in Essex has three listings (for 1801, c. 1808–1809 and 1809) of poor-relief recipients, which give considerable details of the families and their incomes from all sources (including the earnings of all family members as well as parish relief). Thus it is possible to take into account both the earnings that the lone mothers and their children had in addition to their parish assistance, and the earnings of the wife and children in the two-parent families.

In January 1801 in Terling, the adult-equivalent income from the parish for the lone mothers was equivalent to 61 per cent of the income from earnings of unsupported two-parent families, assuming the head to have been fully employed and earning the average male agricultural wage for the area. If one considers total income for both groups (i.e. from the parish and from the earnings of women and children) then this figure rises to 74 per cent. As one might expect, it was more likely that lone parents and their children would work to supplement their parish income, than would the wives and children of male heads of two-parent households not receiving parish support. Payment of relief does not appear to have hindered any work incentives for the heads of lone-parent families. The same findings are borne out in the Terling listings for c. 1808–1809 and February 1809. In c. 1808–1809 the percentage was 80 for the first calculation and 88 for the second. In February 1809 the respective percentages were 83 and 95. It should be noted that these payments do not include payments of rent by the parish nor payments in kind. Some details of the latter are given in the documents, and such payments certainly included, on a regular basis, flour, rice and herrings. Were rents and payments in kind added the figures would be at least 20 per cent higher. If we make the same assumptions about the value of these figures as we made for those of the Yorkshire parishes the percentages would be higher by between 18 and 28, which remarkably would take them well over the average earnings of male-headed families in many cases.

The Terling figures can be compared with further evidence from St Andrew's parish in Worcester in 1795.[29] Although the Worcester documentation is in many respects less detailed than that for Terling, the same two calculations can be made, albeit in a slightly less reliable fashion. The respective percentages (without and then with female and child earnings) were 43 and 66. However, these figures do not include rents or payments in kind. When the value of these is added (as before) the percentages rise to 81 and 98 respectively. The real percentages would presumably have

been higher than this because rents in Worcester at that time would probably have been higher than in rural Yorkshire.

DISCUSSION

Although they are based on different areas and provide varying degrees of detail, and therefore accuracy, all these figures give a consistent picture. They indicate a very high level of parish support for lone mothers relative to working families and are significantly higher than the relative level of transfer payments at any time under the post-war system of social security. In this the results confirm Thomson's findings. There are of course dangers in a general methodology applied to the early nineteenth century which looks only at income data, for this was a society in which the poor and labouring classes in some parishes were heavily dependent on a foraging economy as well as on money wages (notably in unenclosed parishes),[30] and where payment in kind, or in particular under forms of the truck system, were often widespread. Different kinds of households may have chosen, or been forced into, different combinations of the various possibilities for survival available in any given region, and these considerations will closely affect any proper assessment of their living standards. One needs to bear in mind this context and the very localised variations, although it is usually difficult to adjust the income figures in any adequate way so as to take them into account. As far as the parishes used here are concerned, it is unlikely that these considerations substantially affect the argument. In short, it appears that those dependent on poor relief in the past were able to achieve a similar standard of living to other families who were employed: a situation almost inconceivable today when concern with 'incentives' is the over-riding consideration in setting benefit levels. One might note that payment of benefits with the relative value shown here did not appear to dampen 'incentives' during that period of rapid economic growth subsequently described as the Industrial Revolution.

Is it the case, therefore, that the British welfare system, as laid down in the Elizabethan Statutes, has been eroded since the mid-nineteenth century, to offer benefits today which are a shadow of their previous relative value? In the context of historiographical views on the 'rise of the Welfare State', this question would have seemed perverse and inconceivable before Thomson's article. But it is clear that there is a strong element of truth in it. The welfare benefits offered by any society have to be judged in the context of what that society can afford and in the light of its prevailing amenities, scientific knowledge and skills. Early nineteenth-century England was on any measure a far poorer society than that of the late twentieth century, and one in which the apprehension of a Malthusian

crisis was ever present. And yet this society found it morally and socially desirable to pay far higher benefits relative to the wages and income levels of the working class than is now the case.[31] Of course, scientific, sanitary, housing, educational and other advances have made the absolute standard of living of those who receive benefits higher than previously, and indeed it would have been remarkable if this were not so, given advances in wealth and the sophistication with which natural resources are now controlled. Perhaps it could also be claimed that poverty is relative today in a rather different way than in the past in the sense that, had poor-law authorities allocated much less than they did, families would have received what in modern terms would be considered a seriously deficient diet. However, there is much evidence to suggest that benefit levels today themselves provide little more than a minimum standard of living, with hardship, debts and unmet needs common features of life for those on benefit,[32] and there is little doubt that the extent to which pensioners and lone-parent families are 'relatively deprived' has grown considerably. The financial penalties today for being state-dependent, the difference between incomes in and out of work, are extreme compared to the early nineteenth century. The manual working class was itself a much higher proportion of the population then than it is now, and upward social mobility in the twentieth century has raised average earnings relative to those of the working class, which makes comparisons over time of the relative value of Poor-Law benefits even more damaging to the present than we have depicted.

Pensioners and lone-parent families, who were mainly (although not entirely) widows, represent perhaps the most clearly 'deserving' of welfare recipients, and it could be that this is the explanation for the relatively high transfer payments made to these groups. If this was the case we would expect to find that the adult-equivalent payments made to able-bodied married men dependent on the parish were considerably lower in relation to normal earned income than such payments made to the elderly or lone mothers. If this was not so then it would reduce the usefulness of the 'deserving – undeserving' distinction as an explanation for the relatively high incomes of the elderly and lone parents.

Of the evidence considered here, only that from Terling is adequate to suggest a tentative answer to this question. It shows that the adult-equivalent income of families headed by a married man (aged under 65 and with dependent children) wholly or partially supported by the parish was 93 per cent (1801), 78 per cent (c. 1808–1809) and 82 per cent (1809) of the income they would have earned had they not been aided by the parish, taking account of the average wages in the parish each year, their respective family sizes and making the possibly unrealistic assumption that the wives and children of the two groups earned the same sums. Many of

these men were earning the average male wage for the parish, but the local authorities did not appear to have had any reservations about raising their incomes further through small cash payments and notably through payments in kind (flour, rice, herrings), which have not been included in the above calculations. The percentages would have been higher if payment in kind was included. The average wage for these men in 1801, for example, was 10.3 shillings, effectively equivalent to the average male agricultural wage for the county. Female and child earnings added an average of 1.3 shillings per family to this each week. The parish then contributed an average of about 0.6 shillings in cash to the income of each family, and it paid virtually all of them in kind, the average value of which was probably about the same as the cash payment. Allowing for payment in kind in this way, in 1801 the parish provided 9.3 per cent of the total incomes of these families, women and children earned 10.2 per cent of the total and the men earned 80.5 per cent. In c. 1808–1809 the respective percentages were 14.2, 15.5 and 70.3. In 1809 they were 16.0, 13.7 and 70.3.

One should not therefore think in terms of a high contribution from the parish for this group who were partially dependent upon it. However there is little evidence of discrimination against such men in favour of the more 'deserving' categories of the poor, as the adult-equivalent incomes of married men receiving poor relief were about the same as those for the elderly and the lone mothers. This is not the place to enter into the debate on the issue of the supposedly clear-cut distinction between family allowances or 'head money', and the varieties of 'Speenhamland' and their respective consequences.[33] But we can note here that payments to two-parent families may often have served other paternalistic, placatory or compensatory functions, beyond the narrowly defined motives and effects assumed in economic analyses of the Poor Law. The 'right to relief' assuredly had a different rationale then than today, while also providing a form of relief akin in sum and coverage to Child Benefit today. Clearly the 'deserving' families were receiving more from the parish by virtue of their obviously precarious economic circumstances, but the payments to them have to be interpreted in the context of payments also being made to married fathers in employment. The fact that such men, whose weekly wages were in some cases as high as 12 shillings or more, were also provided for by the parish emphasises the encompassing nature of the Old Poor Law. It is clear that an implicit policy to make up income to almost the level prevailing for the fully employed non-dependent agricultural class covered virtually all those who were in any way dependent on the Old Poor Law, and not just the elderly or lone parents.

A simplistic notion of a 'deserving–undeserving' distinction therefore does not appear to provide an adequate explanation for these findings.

However there is a sense in which the concept of the poor as 'deserving' would have a specific meaning in the context of society at that time. In a Poor-Law system based entirely on the parish as the unit of administration, knowledge of, and sympathy for, particular cases was likely to be far more prevalent than is so under the deliberately impersonal regime of the modern D.H.S.S. More generally, it was intrinsic to the nature of the Poor Law and the labour market that the geographical boundaries of empathy and sympathy were both narrower and the local effect more humane than is now the case. Parish society closely circumscribed the bounds of pity in such a way as to exclude any 'outsiders' from the exercise of an otherwise indulgent humanity. The settlement laws and the notion of having a 'parish settlement', of belonging, were fundamental to local social relations and the working of the Poor Law. Historians are confronted with what, on the modern terms of scale, appears as a contradiction. On the one hand there was the whipping of 'vagrants' or beggars out of the parish, the forcible ejection of unmarried pregnant women in labour from the parish if they were not settled there in order to prevent a settlement for the child, the splitting up of settled but unmarried mothers from their children if the latter had been born elsewhere. The examples of 'inhumanity' of this sort are many but they virtually all refer to those who were 'strangers', those who did not belong, that is those who were settled elsewhere, or who (like the Irish or other 'aliens') had no identifiable settlement anywhere. Settlement and judicial records bear abundant witness to the parochial boundaries of a selective but essentially intolerant zenophobia. We like to think that our moral attitudes and the limits of our sympathy are somewhat broader today. Yet there still exists in many areas vestiges of the older viewpoint (to say nothing of attitudes towards racial and immigration issues), and the twentieth century abounds in examples of a determination intellectually to justify the restriction of sympathy only to certain people. These are aspects of historical welfare provision which need to be remembered.

On the other hand, there was in the past much generosity to morally acceptable, locally settled inhabitants, as documented here and by Thomson, the erosion of which we have to explain. Clearly, the striking contrast over time raises complicated questions as to who have been the beneficiaries of economic growth, and may point to significant shifts in beliefs on causes of poverty, in attitudes towards taxation and the poor, and above all may suggest changes from a religious and paternalistic to a more strictly economic perception of society and social responsibility. The issue is complex, but some parts of the historical explanation can be outlined here, if we concentrate in particular on changes in administration. Further, important possible causes linked to shifts in economic and class

stratification, more specifically to the question of who benefited from economic growth and free collective bargaining, necessarily have to be largely omitted from this explanation given the absence of historiographical consensus. Debate on such issues as the distribution of income and the 'labour aristocracy' remains indeterminate, and will need to be further resolved before greater precision can be given to the explanation.

One should note that the changes which Thomson outlined after 1834, and particularly after the 1860s, coincided with the expansion of the administrative scale, the adoption of the Union system, and the gradual changes affecting settlement as 'irremovability' legislation was introduced (in 1846, 1848–1849 and in 1861), as settlement became less a parish and more a union phenomenon (in 1865 and 1876), and as the poor rate came to be levied on a union basis (in 1847 and 1865). Increasingly the Guardians, like the Public Assistance Committees, the Unemployment Assistance Boards or the Supplementary Benefits Commission after them, dealt in a more impersonal way with claimants who they did not commonly know, who were no longer their neighbours, kin, fellow cultivators or journeymen, employees or ex-employees, and with whom they had no engaging obligations of reciprocity, no social capital to maintain. Increasingly too, with a growing theoretical and practical centralisation of bureaucratic and financial control linked inescapably to economic sophistication, the details of administration passed out of the local hands of those with an acquired and even self-interested proclivity to sympathy, whose conscience, visible obligations and amenability to moral pressure predisposed them to generosity, and into the lap of those whose responsibility it was to implement whichever national economic doctrine had at the time become intellectually and politically paramount. With few exceptions, neither classical economics nor more recent macro-economic theories give much thought to the non-entrepreneurial individual, however deserving, except perhaps as a hindrance to growth-oriented priorities. Economics naturally shuns personal responsiveness in the interests of analytical or 'scientific' rigour: the intellectual attractions of conjuring with limited, quantifiable and impersonal variables has readily legitimated a more dismissive attitude towards the dwindling relative incomes of those who have become defined as social-security categories rather than individuals. These groups have become largely irrelevant in the business of demand management, losers because of an historical shift away from very localised and personally sympathetic social relations coupled with important steps in the development of economic analysis. In this sense the centralisation of policy making, intrinsic to the 'rise of the Welfare State', may itself have contributed to the deteriorating relative position of the poor. Needless to say, the latter were left out of the bargaining gains of

organised labour after the mid-nineteenth century, but probably bore the brunt of the class opposition to that unionisation. With the exception of the inter-war National Unemployed Workers' Movement, they have never been politically organised in an effective manner, and there has been little movement in that direction over the past decade. The poor have long ceased to be both the beneficiaries and the victims of a clannish and suspicious parochial zenophobia in a society where localism could override class. Instead they have become subject to the exclusivity of politicians, policy-makers and academics whose policy preoccupations and class interests render the poor as outsiders, politically insignificant and personally unknown – indeed a group to whom they have as little to answer for as one parish had for the poor of another. Certainly there are advantages in a supposedly 'impersonal' system of social security, on the grounds that without clear rules, rights and guidelines those believed to be 'undeserving' would lose out. And today it would of course be naive even to entertain the supposition that we could return to the organisation of the Old Poor Law. But we should perhaps be far less quick to congratulate ourselves on the advances in welfare that the modern Welfare State has provided.

APPENDIX A

Lists of inhabitants: families headed by a lone parent

Place	*Date*	*Population*[a]	*Simple family households with children*	*Number of lone parents*			*Lone parents* (%)
				Fathers	*Mothers*	*Total*	
Stafford, Staffordshire	1551	1,622	232	13	28	41	17.7
Ealing, Middlesex	1599	400	56	2	9	11	19.6
Goodnestone, Kent	1676	280	40	4	5	9	22.5
Clayworth, Nottinghamshire	1676	401	67	4	14	18	26.9
Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire	1684	780	110	6	13	19	17.3
Clayworth, Nottinghamshire	1688	412	69	6	10	16	23.2
Ludlow, Shropshire	1689	1,289	148	10	23	33	22.3
Renhold, Bedfordshire	1689	159	30	2	2	4	13.3
Kirby, Kendal, Stricklandgate, Westmorland	1695	743	79	6	16	22	27.9
Lichfield, Staffordshire	1692	2,861	354	8	49	57	16.1

APPENDIX A (*cont.*)

Place	Date	Population[a]	Simple family households with children	Number of lone parents			Lone parents (%)
				Fathers	Mothers	Total	
Shrewsbury, Welshward, Shropshire	1695	1,572	224	11	44	55	24.6
Shrewsbury, Stoneward, Shropshire	1695	1,470	216	9	46	55	25.5
St Mary le Bow, London	1695	693	59	6	4	10	17.0
St Mary Woolchurch, London, Middlesex	1695	483	42	2	2	4	9.5
St Ethelburgh, London, Middlesex	1695	644	73	3	14	17	23.3
St Mary Bothaw, London, Middlesex	1695	324	29	2	4	6	20.7
St Mary, Southampton, Hampshire	1695	192	30	1	4	5	16.7
Shropshire rural[b]	1695–1702	1,517	230	16	35	51	22.2
St Botolphs, Bishopgate, London, Middlesex	1696	1,005	118	7	18	25	21.2
St Johns, Southampton, Hampshire	1696	147	22	0	13	13	59.1
St Lawrence, Southampton, Hampshire	1696	300	35	3	5	8	22.9
All Saints without Barr, Southampton, Hampshire	1697	376	69	3	13	16	23.2
Holy Rhood, Southampton, Hampshire	1697	730	128	11	38	49	38.3
Shrewsbury, Castle Ward, Shropshire	1698	1,999	278	18	42	60	21.6
Chisledon, Wiltshire	1700	160	27	3	3	6	22.2
Wroughton Town, Wiltshire	1700	478	77	9	6	15	19.5
Eastcott Tything, Wiltshire	1701	91	57	3	4	7	12.3
Elcombe, Wiltshire	1701	63	6	1	2	3	50.0
Westlecott Tything, Wiltshire	1701	111	14	0	0	0	0.0
Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire	1701	1,627	233	24	33	57	24.5

APPENDIX A (*cont.*)

Place	*Date*	*Population*[a]	*Simple family households with children*	*Number of lone parents*			*Lone parents* (%)
				Fathers	*Mothers*	*Total*	
Lyddington, Wiltshire	1702	230	46	2	13	15	32.6
Guston, Kent	1705	80	14	0	4	4	28.6
Womenswold, Kent	1705	107	15	0	1	1	6.7
Wotton, Kent	1705	85	13	0	1	1	7.7
Little Mongham and Ashley Borough, Kent	1705	162	27	2	4	6	22.2
Shepherdswell, Kent	1705	160	22	2	0	2	9.1
Adisham, Kent	1705	125	20	1	2	3	15.0
Ash Chilton, Kent	1705	728	96	6	10	16	16.7
Ash Overland, Kent	1705	454	74	6	5	11	14.9
Briarfristone, Kent	1705	50	8	1	2	3	37.5
Buckland, Kent	1705	107	14	2	0	2	14.3
Frogham Borough, Kent	1705	100	16	1	3	4	25.0
Forthampton and Swinly, Gloucestershire	1752	288	31	4	2	6	19.4
Lower Winchendon, Oxfordshire	eighteenth century	215	24	2	1	3	12.5
Renhold, Bedfordshire	1773	300	45	2	2	4	8.9
Cardington, Bedfordshire	1782	607	108	5	18	23	21.3
Great Strickland, Westmorland	1787	187	23	1	2	3	13.0
Hilton, Westmorland	1787	192	19	0	4	4	21.1
Kaber, Westmorland	1787	156	26	1	4	5	19.2
Hartsop and Patterdale, Westmorland	1787	317	40	3	2	5	12.5
Newby, Westmorland	1787	214	32	1	6	7	21.9
Murton, Westmorland	1787	87	8	0	0	0	0.0
Newbiggin, Westmorland	1787	127	19	0	3	3	15.8
Askham, Westmorland	1787	294	37	0	4	4	10.8
Bampton, Westmorland	1787	678	86	2	10	12	14.0
Sockbridge, Westmorland	1787	164	21	1	0	1	4.8
Barton, Westmorland	1787	n.a.	32	1	1	2	6.2
Corfe Castle, Dorset	1790	1,239	141	14	16	30	21.3
Tissington, Derbyshire	1791–1795	258	33	1	3	4	12.1
Balborough, Derbyshire	1792	682	100	6	12	18	18.0
Ardleigh, Essex	1796	1,126	127	8	8	16	12.6
Winwick, Lancashire[c]	1801	n.a.	65	5	14	19	29.2
Binfield, Berkshire[c]	1801	889	103	2	7	9	8.7
Barkway and Reed, Hertfordshire[c]	1801	995	120	10	12	22	18.3

APPENDIX A (*cont.*)

Place	*Date*	*Population*[a]	*Simple family households with children*	*Number of lone parents*			*Lone parents* (%)
				Fathers	*Mothers*	*Total*	
Littleover, Derbyshire[c]	1811	353	41	1	1	2	4.9
Mickleover, Derbyshire[c]	1811	580	52	3	2	5	9.6
Braintree, Essex[c, d]	1821	n.a.	82	3	8	11	13.4
Houghton Conquest, Bedfordshire	1839	658	108	2	5	7	6.5
Ardleigh, Essex[c]	1851	1,737	234	17	13	30	12.8
Corfe Castle, Dorset[c]	1851	1,984	255	22	16	38	14.9
Total			5,529	333	720	1,053	19.0
Percentage of all lone-parent families				32%	68%	100	

[a] Population totals are summary estimates in some cases.
[b] Includes Betton, Sutton, Alkmore, Longmore, Broughton, Yorton, Alderton.
[c] Census returns.
[d] Sample.

APPENDIX B

The following tables give the basic data from which the calculations of adult-equivalent income since 1966 were made.

Adult-equivalent income was calculated as follows, taking 1972 as an example.

The number of adults (6,873) plus the number of children multiplied by 0.45 (3,448 $\times 0.45 = 1{,}552$) gives the number of adult equivalents (8,425) divided by the number of households (3,065) gives the average number of adult-equivalents per household (2.75). The average household income (44.29) is then divided by this to give the adult-equivalent income (16.11).

B 1. *Average net and gross household income: households headed by a manual worker*

	Average household income		*Adult-equivalent household income*	
Date	*Gross*	*Net*	*Gross*	*Net*
1966	27.86	24.16	9.80	8.52
1972	44.29	n.a.	16.11	n.a.
1975	79.46	n.a.	29.85	n.a.
1978	115.83	94.42	44.51	36.28
1981	175.03	140.27	66.90	53.62
1983	208.03	164.04	80.25	63.28
1984	221.51	174.83	86.09	67.94

	Sample sizes			
Date	*Households*	*Adults*	*Children–adult equivalents*	
1966	1,675	3,941	1,805	4,753
1972	3,065	6,873	3,448	8,425
1975	2,901	6,181	3,425	7,722
1978	2,764	5,861	2,959	7,193
1981	2,659	5,633	2,941	6,956
1983	1,982	4,224	2,033	5,139
1984	2,085	4,433	2,071	5,365

Source: Department of Employment, *Family Expenditure Survey Annual Reports* for 1966 (table 9), 1972 (tables 23 and 32), 1975 (tables 25 and 37), 1978 (tables 28, 29, 30 and 40), 1981 (tables 16 and 23), 1983 (tables 15 and 22) and 1984 (tables 15 and 22).

B 2. *Benefit rates for a widow with one child: Widowed Mothers Allowance plus Child Benefit*[a]

Date	*Average amount over the year*	*Adult-equivalent amount*[b]
1966	6.00	4.14
1969	6.89	4.75
1972	9.23	6.37
1975	15.31	10.56
1978	26.28	18.12
1981	39.79	27.44
1983	46.83	32.30
1984	48.44	33.41

[a] Child benefit for 1975 and after.
[b] Lone mother with one child equals 1.45 adult equivalents.
Source: D.H.S.S., *Social Security Statistics 1985* (1986), tables 11.01 and 30.01.

B 3. *Supplementary-Benefit scale rates for a lone parent with one child: minimum and maximum amounts according to the age of the child*[a]

	Average weekly amount over the year		*Adult-equivalent amount*[b]	
Date	*Ordinary rate*	*Long-term rate*	*Ordinary rate*	*Long-term rate*
1969	5.95–6.67	—	4.10–4.59	—
1972	7.74–9.09	—	5.34–6.27	—
1975	12.17–14.34	14.52–16.69	8.39–9.89	10.00–11.15
1978	18.77–22.10	22.29–25.62	12.94–15.24	15.38–17.67
1981	28.92–32.57	34.82–38.48	19.94–22.46	24.00–26.54
1983	34.64–39.05	41.68–46.09	23.89–26.93	28.74–31.78
1984	36.16–40.73	43.51–48.08	24.93–28.09	30.00–33.16

[a] Up to the age of 16.
[b] Lone mother with one child equals 1.45 adult-equivalents.
Source: D.H.S.S., *Social Security Statistics 1985* (1986), table 34.01.

We are grateful to Michael Anderson, David Thomson and Richard Wall for their helpful comments.

ENDNOTES

1 D. Thomson, 'The decline of social security: falling state support for the elderly since early Victorian times', *Ageing and Society* **4** (1984), 451–82. See also his excellent discussion, 'Welfare and the historians', in L. Bonfield *et al.* eds., *The world we have gained: histories of population and social structure* (Oxford, 1986).

2 See in particular W. G. Runciman, *Relative deprivation and social justice* (1966); and P. Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (1979, London, 1983 ed.), 31: 'Poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation....Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from the ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.'

3 For a discussion see R. Leete, 'One-parent families: numbers and characteristics', *Population Trends* **13** (1978), 4–9; and J. Haskey, 'One-parent families in Great Britain', *Population Trends* **45** (1986), 5–13. See also Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom*, ch. 22, on 'One-parent families', and *ibid.*, 783, on the need for discussion of the history of social policies for one-parent families.

4 Haskey, 'One-parent families', 5–13.

5 M. Anderson, 'What is new about the modern family: a historical perspective', in British Society for Population Studies, *The Family* (London, 1983), 4.

6 Derived from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census Historical Tables, 1801–1981, England and Wales* (1981). See also D. E. C. Eversley, 'The family and housing policy: the interaction of the family, the household and the housing market', in British Society for Population Studies, *The Family* (1983).

7 See K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor; social change and agrarian England, 1660–1900* (Cambridge, 1985), 322–34, where the percentage of children leaving home at different ages for apprenticeship is given, as well as the mean age for all children quoted here. For further discussion of the age of leaving home and life-cycle practice, see R. Wall, 'The age of leaving home', *Journal of Family History* **3** (1978); R. Wall, 'Leaving home and the process of household formation in pre-industrial England', *Continuity and Change* **1** (3) (1986), paper presented to the Anglo-Hungarian Conference of Historians at Szecseny, 1986; M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971); and R. Davies, Community, parish and poverty; Old Swinford, 1660–1730 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1987).

8 In some of these communities, simple family households were less numerous than they were in England, although it is unlikely that this seriously affects the comparisons. However one should be aware that in certain populations complex households may well have been an important resource for the lone parent, particularly when her dowry was being reclaimed.

9 E.E.C., *Lone parents and poverty in the E.E.C.* (Copenhagen, 1982); A. J. Kahn and S. Kamerman, *Income transfers for families with children* (Philadelphia, 1983).

10 Indeed it was not until the 1839 Custody of Infants Act that mothers were given their first legal right to custody of their children. See J. Eekelaar and M. Maclean, *Maintenance after divorce* (Oxford, 1986), 19.

11 And see C. Delphy, *Close to home: a materialist analysis of women's oppression* (London, 1984), 100.
12 We are grateful to Michael Anderson for providing the census material, and to Kevin Schurer for his valuable assistance in computation.
13 Department of Health and Social Security, *Social Security Statistics, 1985* (1986).
14 It should perhaps be noted that the evidence from Corfe Castle suggested that most of the lone-mothers there were widows.
15 See for example D. Marsden, *Mothers alone* (London, 1973); M. Finer, *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, Cmnd. 5629 (1974); R. Layard *et al.*, *The causes of poverty, Royal Commission on the distribution of income and wealth, background paper No. 5* (London, 1978); Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom*; E. Evason, *Just me and the kids* (Belfast, 1980).
16 Finer, *Report on One-Parent Families*, para. 5.36.
17 According to evidence from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *General Household Survey, Preliminary Results 1984* (1985), the proportion of lone mothers in employment fell from 48 per cent in 1980–2 to 39 per cent in 1982–4.
18 P. Whiteford, *A family's needs: equivalence scales, poverty and social security* (Australia, Department of Social Security Development Division, 1985).
19 Thomson, 'Decline of social security'. For county agricultural wage data see, for example, Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, 30. These data indicate that in 1833, 1837 and 1850, the mean agricultural weekly wage for these three southern counties combined was 10.5, 10.1 and 8.2 shillings respectively. These sums were 93 per cent, 99 per cent and 86 per cent of the average county agricultural wage for these years.
20 The examinations used for this purpose relate to many rural parishes in Yorkshire, for the most part different from, although near to, the parishes used to obtain transfer payments. The results were very similar to those obtained for larger areas of eastern England. Source survival is such that it is impossible to find examinations which cover significant numbers of those single-parent families whose incomes from the poor law are under discussion. But there is no reason to suppose that figures derived from the settlement records will be unrepresentative of these families.
21 Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York, PR. MIL. 11–18; PR. NEW. 16–23, 24–6; PR. S/R. 5–7; PR. K/U. 12–16; PR. GOOD. 6–9, 10–13; PR. M/W. 21; PR. SCA. 15–32.
22 The frequently reissued Book of Orders was mainly concerned with public dealing in grain and regulation of the market, but it also had a section urging the setting of the unemployed to work on raw materials, the cost of which was funded by the rates. For discussion of the policy measures it contained, see P. Slack, 'Books of Orders: the making of English social policy, 1577–1631', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* **30** (1980); B. Sharp, 'Popular protest in seventeenth-century England', in B. Reay ed., *Popular culture in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1985), 278–9; R. B. Outhwaite, 'Dearth and government intervention in English grain markets, 1590–1700', *Economic History Review* **34** (1981); A. M. Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', in J. Thirsk ed., *The agrarian history of England and Wales, 1500–1640* **4** (Cambridge, 1966), 580–6.
23 For further details of such payments being made under the Old Poor Law, see Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, ch. 3, and the references contained there; F. H. Erith, *Ardleigh in 1796* (East Bergholt, 1978), 6–22; F. G. Emmison, 'Relief of the poor at Eaton Socon, Bedfordshire, 1706–1834', *Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, **15** (1933); M. F. Lloyd Prichard, 'The treatment of poverty in Norfolk, 1700–1850' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1949); Davies, 'Community,

parish and poverty', 148–50, 210, 224, 232, 247. For a discussion of parish doleing customs, an important additional source of income, see the interesting account in B. Bushaway, *By rite; custom, ceremony and community in England, 1700–1880* (London, 1982), 87, 180–90, 257–8. Some items given to the poor were recorded in churchwardens' accounts, but information from such accounts has not been used to supplement the calculations made from overseers' accounts in these Yorkshire parishes. And of course details of further sums provided by parochial charities have usually not survived.

24 A. L. Bowley, 'The statistics of wages in the United Kingdom during the last hundred years', part 1, 'Agricultural wages', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* **61** (1898); A. L. Bowley, 'The statistics of wages', part IV, 'Agricultural wages concluded. Earnings and general averages', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* **62** (1899).

25 D. Davies, *The case of the labourers in husbandry* (Bath, 1795).

26 A. Young, *A six months tour through the north of England* (1770, 1771, London, 1967 ed.), vol. 1, 235, 238; vol. 2, 6, 64.

27 W. Marshall, *The rural economy of Yorkshire* (1778, 1796 ed.) **1**, 387–92; **2**, 32, 35, 59.

28 Contemporary Poor-Law practice frequently aimed to put forward the possibilities of partial or entire self-sufficiency for those who were parochially dependent – for example, in the provision of raw materials for cottage-industrial employment, or of livestock – and there appears to have been no notion that those who worked for financial rewards were thereby disentitled to relief. Today, benefits (with the exception of Child Benefit, Housing Benefit and Family Income Supplement) are generally paid as a replacement for earnings, to those who are not employed. Modern social security practice of course discourages Supplementary Benefit recipients from working. Such a policy finds few counterparts in early nineteenth-century practice. It is of considerable interest to evaluate this change, to understand the historical shifts in terminology involved, and to ask why it has come about.

29 The documentation analysed here for Terling and St Andrews, Worcester, is available among the listings held by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.

30 For further discussion of the rural 'foraging' and open-field economy see Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, ch. 4. As far as the parishes used here are concerned, enclosure was not a major consideration in the early nineteenth century. Only Seaton Ross was enclosed after 1800.

31 For the parishes studied here, calculations were also made on the relative value of relief to the elderly in the past, and the results are within the same range as Thomson's findings for the 1830s.

32 See M. Clark, 'The unemployed on supplementary benefit: living standards and making ends meet', *Journal of Social Policy* **7** (1978); L. Burghes, *Living from hand to mouth* (London, 1980); R. Berthoud, *Study of the 1980 reform of Supplementary Benefit, Working Papers* (London, 1983); S. Baldwin and K. Cooke, *How much is enough?* (London, 1984); E. Evason, *On the edge: a study of poverty and long-term unemployment in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1985).

33 In particular see M. Blaug, 'The myth of the Old Poor Law and the making of the New', in M. W. Flinn and T. C. Smout eds., *Essays in social history* (Oxford, 1974); M. Blaug, 'The Poor-Law Report re-examined', *Journal of Economic History* **24** (1964); D. N. McCloskey, 'New perspectives on the Old Poor Law', *Explorations in Economic History* **10** (1972–1973).